Richard Salant Is Successor

CBS News Executive Morale Upset By Issues That Made Friendly Quit

2/17/68

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NEW YORK, Feb. 16 Columbia Broadcasting System named an acting president of its New Division today. But morale in the upper echelons was badly shattered in the aftermath of Fred Friendly's resignation from the post Tuesday over the issue of whether news or commerce should have priority in broadcasting.

Friendly's successor is Richard Salant, 51-year-old vice president who had held the news job from 1961 to 1964, when Friendly was appointed. Other news executives at CBS spoke with warm respect for Salant, but they were clearly torn and profoundly distressed both by Friendly's departure and the blow to the principle of TV news responsibility which he had argued.

One executive, who asked not to be named, said CBS had "a long history of struggle between the businessmen and the journalists. This thing now has hit throughout the company, not only in the News Division. There's a dismayed awareness that it's going to reflect on us all through the industry, in the world of journalism, down on Wall Street and in Washington.

"It gives a point to the people who've always said we're just a bunch of greedy bastards."

The issue came to a head over Friendly's recommendation that CBS carry live telecasts of the Senate Vietnam hearings, particularly the testimony of former Ambassador George Kennan last Thursday. He was over-

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CBS Executive Morale Rocks Under Changes

ruled by John Schneider, the 39-year-old who had been appointed the day before as "Group Vice President — Broadcasting" with authority over Friendly and the company's television, radio and station divisions.

Schneider insisted on running an old "I Love Lucy" film instead on the ground that opinion-makers are not at home to watch daytime television and the sacrifice of commercial programing was therefore not worth while.

In the letter of resignation which he published, Friendly said that was a "business not a news judgment." The loss of autonomy for the News Division of Schneider's new appointment was "a form of emasculation," he wrote.

Other CBS executives put it more bluntly. "Schneider is a glib salesman," one said. "He's just not equipped to take over those decisions."

Only William S. Paley, chairman, and Dr. Frank Stanton, president, are above Schneider now in the CBS chain of command.

Demand Rejected

Friendly's demand to be freed of Schneider's authority after the ruling on Lucy versus Vietnam was rejected by Stanton, an executive said, "because Schneider was the boy Stanton selected himself and Frank just wasn't big enough to back down and concede a mistake.

Friendly was as upset as his former colleagues over the blow-up.

"I'm numb," he said by telephone, "I'm heartbroken, because I loved that job—the way it was." He had taken a salary cut from his $100,000 yearly earnings as a producer to become head of the News Division in 1964 and seek to strengthen its challenge to the National Broadcasting Co. leadership in the news field. CBS would not say what either Friendly or Salant are paid.

'I Had to Go'

"But anybody who knows me," Friendly continued, "knows I had to go. There just wasn't anything else I could do. I'm embarrassed to use the word principle. But it's the only one I can use. This (coverage of important public events) is what TV is there to do. I've always felt that way and I still feel that way."

He said he had no idea of what he would do now, but that any new job he decided to take would probably not be in broadcasting. "I certainly wouldn't work for a CBS competitor," Friendly said.

After Friendly quit, CBS changed its stand on the hearings and decided on live coverage, adding a scheduled evening prime time summary which is to include taped portions of the Kennan testimony.

But it was only a plaster on the deeply wounded feelings of its staff.

Director's Views

Bill Leonard, director of news and documentary programing, said for example, "Salant is a terrific guy. Of course it will work out all right. But I just can't comment. I'm a tremendously close professional admirer and friend of Fred Friendly and I will be until the day I die." His voice was tautly emotional, as all voices at CBS seemed to be during the day.

Nobody at the company supposed there would be further resignations now, but nobody supposed the company would recover from the blow to the professional pride of its newsmen for a long time.

It was partly personal—Friendly was loved as well as respected. But it was also more—a sense that "somebody sold out here," as one non-news executive put it.